

THE WAR YEARS

AT LAGO

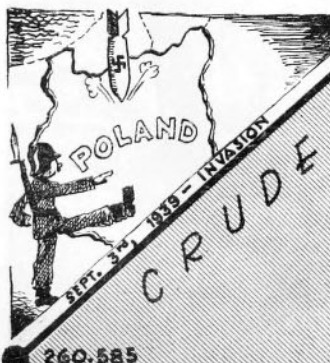
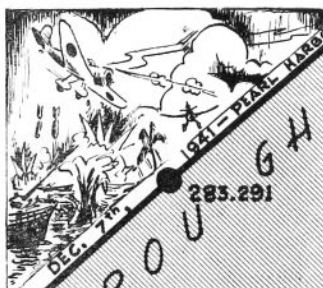
1939 - 1945 A SUMMING - UP

The accomplishments of Lago employees during the war are too well-known to need reviewing: military and government officials have been high in their praise, and many citations and other tokens of merit have been received. This, then, will be chiefly the story of life at Lago during those years, with the people who made the Company's tremendous war production records possible.

Some of it has been told before. Much of it, however, is now told for the first time. It is a historical record, a summing-up for future collection, of Lago and Aruba in the war years.

Above, a tragic and unforgettable sight: blazing oil from the lake tankers "Oranjestad" (visible at left, with its back broken) and "Pedernales" spreads over a wide area of the sea south of the Colony February 16, 1942, after torpedo hits by German submarines. The war was no longer in Europe—it was here.

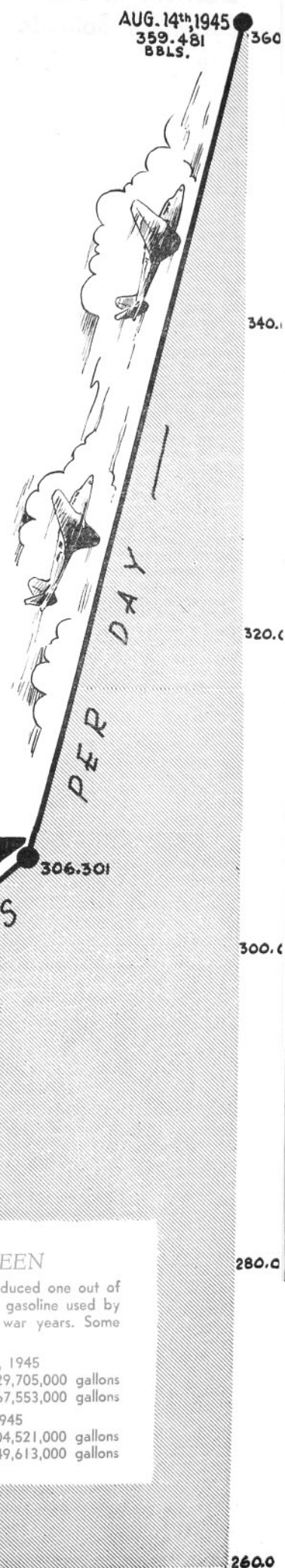
Aki 'riba, un bista trágico e inolvidable: azota kimando di e lake tankernan "Oranjestad" (na banda robes, cu su lomba kibra) y "Pedernales" ta plama riba tamar pa zuid di Colony dia 16 di Februari, 1942, despues cu torpedonan di submarino Aleman a raka nan. Guerra no tabata na Europa só — guerra tabata aki tambe.



ONE IN SIXTEEN

The Lago Refinery at Aruba produced one out of every sixteen barrels of aviation gasoline used by the United Nations during the war years. Some other outstanding records:

September 1, 1939 to August 31, 1945	
High octane gasoline	529,705,000 gallons
Motor gasoline	2,867,553,000 gallons
January 1, 1942 to August 31, 1945	
Submarine type diesel oils	804,521,000 gallons
Navy special fuel oil	2,949,613,000 gallons



WHEN loaded tankers anchored just off the reef flared up like gigantic torches following German torpedo hits, a few hours before dawn February 16, 1942, and shells screamed over the refinery to explode in the tankfarm and the residential area to the north of it, Aruba really knew it was at war.

Lago had been in the fight for a long time. War first came to Aruba with the outbreak of hostilities in Europe on September 3, 1939, when the refinery started furnishing petroleum products for the Allies. It came closer on May 10, 1940, when Germany started into Holland and Belgium, and by sunrise next morning all the German nationals in Aruba were on their way to internment in Bonaire. War was on the Aruba doorstep for a long time after that, but with the February 16 attack it opened the door and walked in.

It is now over a year since war went away. Bomb shelters and the earth-shaking "Long Toms" are gone, and oil again moves out into the world's trade for pleasure automobiles, civilian aviation, and merchant ships bound on peaceful errands. Lagoites who live in San Nicolas and the Colony no longer go to bed with a bag full of "evacuation necessities" as many frankly did for months after the famous February 16 attack, in case they had to make a quick dash to the safety of the north-shore cliffs or the hills near the center of the island.

There was no lack of tension here on the fateful September day seven years ago when the war pot boiled over, spilling German troops all over Poland. With the island dependent on ships for supplies, and all refinery production moving in and out by sea, the ship-sinking reports of the war's first days created a great deal of worry and some fear. The "Pan Aruban" of September 9, 1939 editorialized against these worries, pointing out that the Government was neutral, that most foreigners were from neutral countries, and that neither side could be greatly interested in harming us.

It was midnight of the following May 10 when the grim news reached Aruba that Holland's neutrality had been violated. By the next morning no German citizen was left in Aruba: a lake tanker requisitioned by the Government carried them to Bonaire.

Uncertainty and tension mounted again with the knowledge that Germany now had an interest in us, if they could only reach us, though the fantastic claims made by German radio propagandists did a little toward easing this tension. Once Lord Haw Haw told us our refinery had just been burned to the ground. We looked, but it was still there. (Lord Haw Haw was recently executed for treason in England.)

Immediately after May 10 a contingent of French soldiers landed and moved into quarters northeast of the tankfarm and in other locations on the island. They stayed just long enough for everyone to become used to their berets with the pom-poms on top, and then went away.

Several months later a detachment of British troops, the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders, arrived in Aruba. Veterans of Dunkirk, they came virtually without equipment of war, and were generally thought to be here recovering from their Dunkirk experience. Their kilts, parades and bagpipe band were a never-failing show to take the residents' minds off of their war worries. (Later many of the Camerons died in North Africa, Sicily, and Italy.)

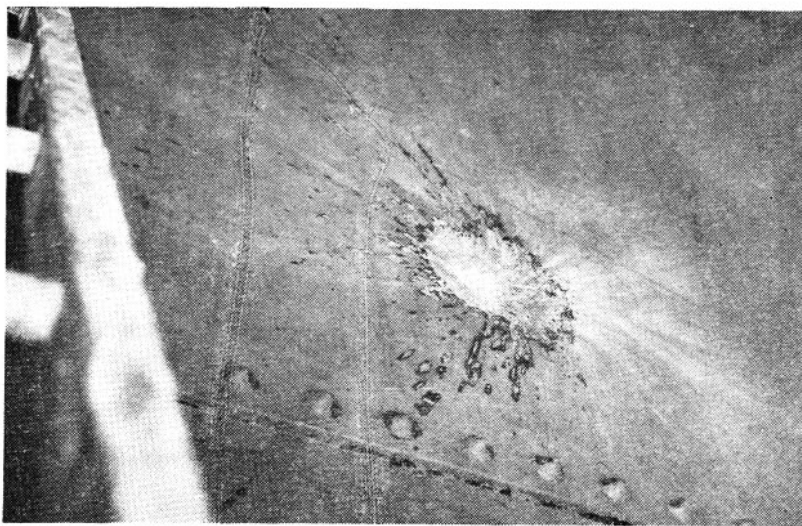
Late in 1940 a military conscription law was passed, and through 1941 Sabaneta Camp gradually expanded with facilities for several thousands of soldiers.

Also in 1940 the Government-sponsored S.A.N.O.A. committee was set up to collect funds for aiding Netherlands war victims, and in a short time it received over 193,000 guilders, with Lago employees and the Company contributing generously. (Within a few weeks after Holland's liberation, this money was sent to the Queen, who devoted it to medical aid for tubercular children.)

The last half of 1940 and all of 1941 passed swiftly, perhaps because so little happened here. Aside from grim news on the radio and a few practise blackouts, the war seemed very distant. The United States' entry in the war in December, 1941 increased the possibility of seeing action, but the general opinion was still "It can't happen here".

Two months later it did happen.

To be continued in the next issue



One of the first shells to strike the Western Hemisphere in World War II made this splashy dent an inch deep in tank 112 the night of February 16. Luckily it struck a glancing blow and failed to break through the tank shell. The dark line of oil leaks below the rivets shows that it loosened the seam. Officially no fragments of the shell were ever found, though early-morning souvenir hunters may have managed this.

Un di e prome balanan cu a raka e parti occidental di mundo den di dos Guerra Mundial a haci e buraco un duim bundo den tanki No. 112 e anochi di 16 di Februari. Afortunadamente e no a dal dure y el e taya di bora e tanki, aunque cu el a hacie lek. Oficialmente nunca a haya ningun resto di e bala; probablemente empleadonan cu a traha rond di e tanki por a haya algo, y a wardé como un recuerdo.

ORA cu tankernan cu tabata ancrá banda di Rif a bula y a keda ta kima manera flambeeunnan gigantesco despues cu nan a worde torpediá pa Alemannan; ora cu nan a tira riba refinaria y cu e tironan a bai cai den Tankfarm y e parti residencial pa noord di djé; e ora ey, net promé cu marduga di dia 16 di Februari, 1942 Aruba a haya sá cu e tabata berdaderamente den guerra.

Lago tabata tuma parti aden basta tempo caba. Di tempo cu guerra a cuminsa na Europa dia 3 di September, 1939, refinaria a cuminsa manda produccion di petroleo pa Aliadonan. Guerra a yega acerca dia 10 di Mei, 1940, ora cu Alemannan a drenta Holanda y Bélgica. Pa su mayan tur esnan di nacionalidad Aleman cu tabatin na Aruba, tabata na cuminda pa Bonaire pa internación. Guerra a keda para riba drempí di Aruba hopi tempo despues di esey, pero cu e ataque di 16 di Februari, el a habri porta drenta.

Awor ta mas di un anja cu guerra a caba. Schuilkelders y cañonnan grandi no ta ey mas y azeta ta den negoció mundial atrobe pa doelnan pacífico.

Loque empleadonan di Lago a logra durante anjanan di guerra ta demasiado conoci pa nos bolbe ripiti. Elogio di oficialidadnan Militar y di Gobierno tabata masha.

Esaki ta historia di bida na Lago durante es anjanan. Esaki lo pone nos hunto cu e hendenan cu a haci posibel e reordenan tremendo di produccion pa guerra. Un parti di e storia ta conoci caba, pero pa via di restriccioannan di censura di tempo di guerra, hopi cos ta sali na cla awor pa di promé bez. Esaki ta un record histórico di Lago y Aruba durante di guerra.

No a laga di falta excitación despues di e dia fatal na September, 7 anja pasa, ora cu tropanan Aleman a yena Polonia. Riba un isla cu ta depende henteramente di importación y cu tur accioannan di refinaria cu tabata bai pa barco, e rapportnan di e promé dianan di guerra a causá hopi preocupación y poco miedo. "Pan Aruban" di September 9, 1939 a publicá un editorial pa mengua e preocupación, mostrando cu Gobierno tabata neutral, cu casi tur estranheronan tabata di nacionnan neutral y cu ningun partida por tabatin gran interes den perjudicá nos.

Tabata mei anochi di 10 di Mei, di e siguiente anja ora cu e noticia fatal a yega Aruba, esta cu Holanda su neutralidad a worde violá. Pa su mayan mainta no tabatin un ciudadano Aleman na Aruba; un lake tanker cu Gobierno a pidi a hiba nan Bonaire.

Incertidumbre y tension a sigui aumentá, sabiendo cu awor Alemania tabatin un interes den nos, si nan por yega cerca nos. E propaganda fantástico pa radio Aleman, sinembargo, a calma e tension un poco. Un bez un cierto Lord Haw Haw a bisa cu nos refinaria a caba di kima plat. Nos a dreí mira, pero ainda e tabata ey. (Recientemente Lord Haw

Haw a worde ehecutá na Inglaterra pa traición.)

Unbez despues di 10 di Mei un trupa di soldá Frances a yega tera. Net ora tur hende a cuminsa custuma cu nan pechi cu pon-pon nan a bai fo'i Aruba.

Varios luna despues trupanan Ingles "Cameron Highlanders" a yega Aruba. Nan tabata veterano di Duinkerken y nan a yega casi sin equipo di guerra y tabata concepto general cu nan a bini aki unicamente pa nan sosegá di nan experiencia di Duinkerken. Nan sayanan plisá, nan paradanan y nan banda di „doedelzakken" semper tabata logra di kita pensamiento di habitantenan for di preocupacionnan di guerra.

Na cabamento di 1940 a drenta un Ley nobo di Consercpción Militar y durante 1941 Sabaneta Camp a aumentá facilidadnan pa acomodá algun mil soldá.

Tambe na 1940, cu asistencia di Gobierno fundación di S.A.N.O.A. a tuma lugar, un comité pa colectá fondonan pa yuda victimanan di guerra Holandes, y den poco tempo nan a recoge mas di 193,000 florin, na cual Lago y su empleadonan a contribui generosamente. Algun dia despues di liberación di Holanda e placa a bai pa La Reina, cu a dedicá tur pa yudanza medical pa muchanan tuberculoso na Holanda.)

Segunda parti di 1940 y henter 1941 a pasa liher, podiser pasobra poco cos a socede aki. Cu excepcion di noticianan di radio y algun ejercicio di blackout, guerra tabata parece basta distante. Ora cu Merca a drenta aden na December 1941, posibilidad di mira accion a aumentá, pero opinion general tabata "Nada no ta pasa aki".

Pero dos luna despues el a pasa!!

(Continuación den próximo número.)

Below, wreckage in the Esso Club the fourth night after "the attack", from a flare shell casing fired by an American warship. (Note trajectory from door in background to the hole in left foreground). Story will appear in a later issue.

Aki bao, destrucción den Esso Club di cuater anochi despues di e "ataque", causá pa un flare shell (bomb di luz) tirá pa un vapor di guerra Americano. (Nota e trayecto di e porta mas atras pa e buraco na banda robes p'adilanti.) Storia di esaki lo ta den e próximo numero.

